

Caregiver Connection

August 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



A commitment to child safety

Thomas Shapley, DSHS Senior Director of Public Affairs

We want to keep you up to date on what the Department of Social and Health Services' Children's Administration is doing to improve the health and safety of children in Washington.

The Children's Administration is committed to child safety, whether children are in their own home or in out-of-home care. Child safety is our utmost priority – across all of our child welfare programs, including child protective services, in-home services, children and youth in out-of-home-care placement, and adoptive placements.

We take to heart anytime harm is inflicted on a child with whom we've had contact, take each child's situation personally and use each child's case as a lesson to evaluate our training and practice.

During this last year, under the new leadership of DSHS Secretary Susan N. Dreyfus and Children's Administration Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson, we have been identifying lessons learned from cases across the system and have changed and continue to change our practices. These changes will help us further strengthen the focus on child safety. For example:

- We are in the process of standardizing the protocol for intake of referrals across the state.
- We have implemented a higher level of safety plan review, and are planning supervisor training.
- The National Center for Child Protection is currently consulting with us and providing on-site training on assessing, developing and monitoring safety plans.
- We have changed how we will review critical incidents. We take the opportunity to learn what happened and what services were provided and are more responsive and deliberate in how we improve our practice.

For more information on what DSHS is doing to help children be healthy and safe, visit our website: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/children.shtml>

1624 Statewide Regional Foster Parent Representatives

REGION 1

Cindy Gardner

rc.gardner@comcast.net

home 509-928-2040

cell 509-714-6961

Kristen Otoupalik

Otoupaliks@yahoo.com

509-244-9957

REGION 2

Mary-Jeanne Smith

smithhomes@hotmail.com

509-876-6245

Victoria Erwin

Victoriaerwin9@yahoo.com

509-386-2423

REGION 3

Debra Ellsworth

dkfoster3@gmail.com

360-941-2244

Shala Crow

fosterhearts@hotmail.com

360-220-3785

REGION 4

Tess Thomas

TMT3000@aol.com

206-371-0974

Talya Miller

mytie5683@aol.com

206-786-1491

REGION 5

Rick Williams

president@kitsapfostercare.org

360-265-7289

Elizabeth Griffin Hall

elizanngriffin@aol.com

h: 360-876-7517

w: 253-473-9252

c: 360-990-9955

REGION 6

Amy Gardner

michaelamy52@msn.com

360-200-2102

Marci Miess

marcimiess@hotmail.com

360-880-5330

Meet Chris and Amy Obringer

Amy's love of horses came from her dad. He moved a lot from family to family when he was a child and found his place and identity when he lived with a family who raised horses. So Amy really knew the healing power of horses.

When Amy and Chris married, they shared a heart for at-risk kids, and they knew they wanted a big family.

Kids... horses... at-risk... and the skills to make it all come together! Those are the things that have brought the Obringer family to this point in their lives. Not very long ago, the Obringer family was happily settled on their horse ranch east of Spokane. Amy was teaching 8th grade and Chris was working for the State. They had 2 young children – Macy, now 7, and Colt, now 3.

Then came 2009 and some big changes. In the summer, Amy visited a youth ranch in Montana that centered their program around horses and she realized that she could make that dream come true on her own ranch. And in the fall, Amy and Chris became licensed as foster parents.

Their first placement was a baby girl who joined them from the hospital. She is now 10 months old. Then they learned that the relative placement of her 2 year old brother was disrupting in another region and they worked with the region to have that child placed with them as well. The boy is now legally free and the termination hearing for the baby is in August. They are looking forward to adopting both children! But they are not done. "We are planning on growing still," says Amy.

Amy's teaching schedule gave her summers to focus on horses and at-risk kids. After a short, but successful season last year, they are now in their first full summer of working with kids and horses together. The kids, all foster or adopted, are learning how to care for the horses and to ride. There are 4 groups of kids attending once a week for 8 weeks. The whole program will culminate in a horse show at their ranch in August with a big barbecue and all the groups together. Amy is enormously proud of all the kids and can't find enough words to describe her wonderful volunteer staff. And we can't forget the importance of those "angels in horse hair" out in the barn! "It was an amazing series of miracles that led many doors to be opened in a short amount of time," Amy remarks.

Amy and Chris absolutely believe they have been called to this life. "I believe God chose these kiddos for us... and we are in love!" Seems like that love will only grow over time, along with their family.



To learn more about Amy's horse program, log on to the Blue Water Youth Ranch website, www.bwyr.org. On the west side of the mountains, check out V2 Farm, www.V2farm.com. This organization is a working farm in Enumclaw that has a Horses and Kids program and a wonderful facility that they would like to share with foster families.

You can too.

10 facts kinship care families (and others) should know about Basic Food



- FACT #1** The Basic Food program is not a welfare program. It is a nutrition assistance program designed to help low-income individuals and families buy and consume nutritious foods.
- FACT #2** Basic Food is an entitlement program. In other words, everyone who applies and is found eligible will get Basic Food benefits.
- FACT #3** Basic Food benefits are for eligible individuals and families, including working households, the elderly, disabled, and certain legal immigrants and their U.S.-born children.
- FACT #4** The Basic Food program does not require you to assign child support payments or cooperate with child support enforcement.
- FACT #5** In 2009, families receiving Kinship Care TANF assistance (child-only grant) and participating in the Basic Food program received an average of \$306.25 per month in Basic Food benefits or about \$95 per person.
- FACT #6** If you have a total household income at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) there is no resource limit. The resource limit for households with income over 200 percent FPL containing an elder (60 or over) or disabled person is up to \$3,000. The resource limit for all other households with income over 200 percent FPL is up to \$2,000.
- FACT #7** Individuals can own or buy a home and still get Basic Food benefits. Basic Food does not require a person to sign away their home.
- FACT #8** If you or someone in your household is age 60 or over or disabled, medical expenses that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted from the total of household income unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays for them. The amount over \$35 can be deducted.
- FACT #9** Households that are eligible for Basic Food benefits can receive discount telephone service from the Washington Telephone Assistance Program, can still get Meals-on-Wheels, and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits. Children in a Basic Food household are automatically enrolled in Child Nutrition benefits such as the School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.
- FACT #10** Applying for Basic Food is easy. You can apply for Basic Food benefits over the internet at: <http://onlineapp.dshs.wa.gov>, or submit a paper application by fax or mail, or apply in person. For more information call 1-877-980-9220.

Tips to soothe your crying infant

Most of you will remember these old tried and true tricks to calming cranky babies. But some of these suggestions may be new or forgotten... or just the right piece of information at the right time.

1. Feed your baby. Hunger is the main reason a baby will cry.
2. Burp your baby. Babies do not have a natural ability to get rid of air built up in their stomach.
3. Swaddle your baby. This may reduce restlessness and crying and improve sleep.
4. Give your baby a lukewarm bath. A great soothing technique, but remember to never leave your baby unattended.
5. Massage your baby. A gentle massage on a baby back, arms, or legs can be very comforting.
6. Give your baby a pacifier. Use sparingly, because if used when your baby isn't crying, it may prove to be ineffective.
7. Make eye contact with your baby and smile. Eye-to-eye contact with your baby when they are crying can distract and comfort them.
8. Kiss your baby. This can help lessen the tension during fierce crying episodes.
9. Kiss the bottom of your baby's feet. A baby's feet are one of the most sensitive spots on their body, light kisses on their feet can help turn a challenging situation into a happy one.
10. Sing Softly. Lullabies were created because of their effectiveness at calming crying babies.
11. Reassure your baby with soft words like "it's ok". This can help comfort you and your baby during a difficult crying episode.
12. Hum in a low tone against your baby's head. Dad's usually do this soothing feature best.

13. Run a Vacuum Cleaner. The noise from a vacuum is referred to as white noise which is any sound produces a loud, neutral, masking sound. Babies find these noises hypnotizing.
14. Run a Dishwasher. Dishwashers have different cycles of white noise which some infants find soothing.
15. Take your baby for a ride in the car. The vibrations from a car have a sleep inducing effect on babies. Always make sure your baby is secure in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat.
16. Rock your baby in a rocker. Rocking your baby in a chair can be very relaxing for you and your baby.
17. Push your baby in a stroller. A stroller ride is the next best thing to a ride in a car.
18. Place your baby in a car seat on top of a running dryer. This is a classic soothing technique, but use caution. Never leave your baby unattended.
19. Put your baby underneath a lighted mobile. The sounds, lights and movements of a mobile can be very amusing and entertaining for a baby.
20. Dance Slowly. Dancing can be fun for both you and your baby and allows for a variety of soothing movements.

The list above is not an all inclusive list as there are many other things you can try to calm your baby's crying. Remember... while many of these techniques will work most of the time, nothing works all the time and that is okay. This does not mean there is anything wrong with you or your baby.



Safer babies in Region 3

Babies are sleeping safer in Region 3 as a result of training on factors that decrease the risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death.

Children's Administration social workers in Region 3 benefited from the training based on curriculum provided by the Healthy Native Babies project. Children's Administration program consultant, Ronda Haun and Region 3 Health and Recovery Services Administration regional medical consultant, Dr. Chalmers, co-facilitated the training.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Information Resource Center provided resource materials, which were distributed to social workers, advising them of the importance of putting babies to sleep on their backs. The materials describe the significant reduction in SIDS deaths since the Back To Sleep campaign started in 1992.

Region 3 intake social workers now ask questions about sleep environment when intake calls concerning infants are received. This change was based on a recommendation made in the 2009 report issued by the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman.

Be knowledgeable about Safe Sleep for babies. For more information on infant safe sleeping go to <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/>

Post Adoption **Support**

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland 509-454-6924

Region 3 – Everett

Natalie Trigsted 425-339-1762
Linda Richardson 425-339-3998

Region 4 – Bellevue

Evie Shiveley 425-590-3072
Jennette Norris 425-590-3069

Region 5 – Tacoma

Cindy Anderson 253-983-6359
Laura Davis 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758
Kim Mower 360-725-6778

Headquarters – Olympia

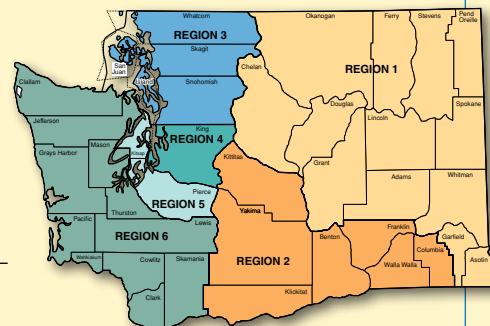
Lonnie Locke 360-902-7932

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

Rate Change

CHANGES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2010

To ensure that Adoption Support expenditures remain within available funds, rates have been reduced to no more than ninety percent 90% of the foster care maintenance payment. This does not apply to adoption support agreements in existence on July 1, 2010. If you have any questions, please contact your regional adoption support program consultant.



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Why don't those DSHS folks speak plain English?

That is a question that is much larger than the topic of this article, but what we wish to tackle today is the consultation group that we lovingly call the 1624 Committee. Doesn't that name just make you want to join?

Maybe this will help – In 2007, the legislature passed a law that the Children's Administration must consult at least quarterly with foster parents to look at issues impacting foster care and to work together to resolve those issues. You may have now figured out that the number of that bill was... you guessed it... 1624! Identifying the newly formed consultation group by the bill number, had no significance to most people; but it was much easier to use than the more explanatory title of Washington State Children's Administration and Foster Parent Consultation Team. That doesn't even make a good acronym!

So we are having a contest! And there will be a prize! We want you to please help us give the group a name that reflects what they do – Identify issues and problem-solve together – and is short and easy to use. This group is working on the things that you care about, so we'd like the name to be clear and have meaning for you.

If you have a suggestion for a name for our group, please email it to Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov. The deadline is August 20, 2010.

This contest is being sponsored by the foster parents in the group who really like hearing your voice! They look forward to your entries and deciding the new name.

Oh no! Not another number!

When working with legislative activity, the staff at the Children's Administration quickly adapts to identifying bills by their assigned numbers. So here's another one to share with you. Many of you may be quite familiar with HB 2106 and some of you may still be learning. HB 2106 directs the Children's Administration to (1) move to performance-based contracting and (2) establish 2 demonstration projects for contracted case management. CA has been holding informational meetings around the state to inform caregivers regarding the planning process. If you missed the meeting in your area, or just want to get your questions answered, try the Transforming Child Welfare webpage at www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/partners/transformCW.asp.

